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ABSTRACT

The A-LM German materials are analyzed in terms of their weakness and positive features, and suggestions for their use and adaptation are presented. It is argued that: the basic dialogue is almost unusable; the structure drills are repetitive and often not challenging; the taped arrangement of the listening exercises is awkward; the dialogue posters are almost worthless; and the reading material is dull. Successful use depends on following the predetermined sequence of activities exactly. In Alberta, where A-LM is the official text, supplementary materials and activities have been created and introduced. These are supplementary dialogues accompanied by flashcards and filmstrips that introduce new vocabulary and structures. Films on Germany are accompanied by suggestions for their use. The point is consistently made that to have reasonable success with the A-LM program, its essential elements must be taught in proper sequence in order to utilize the built-in reinforcing and review aspects. Techniques are suggested for improving verb drills, teaching communication skills, using narratives as the basis for summary writing practice, teaching adjectives and irregular verbs, and continuous evaluation. (AMH)

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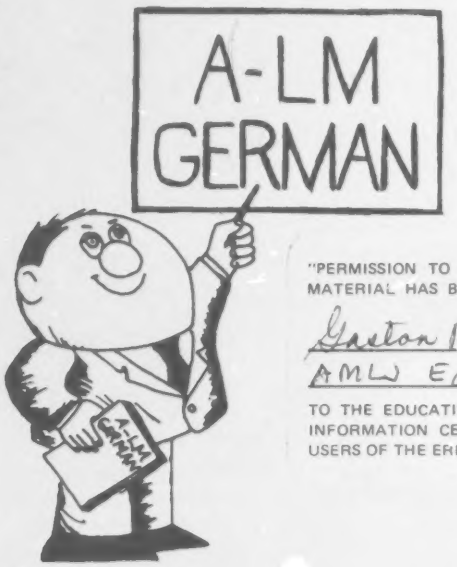
"A-LM German": How to Make it Work



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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is the result of the author's presentation to the 1977 MLC Annual Conference, October 21, in Red Deer.

Most of us have been told at one time or another that, to the "real" teacher, it matters little *what* program or teaching materials he or she is using: an imaginative instructor will always teach effectively no matter what resources are available.

Statements like this contain some truth if they are suggesting that the experienced teacher may accomplish his task *in spite of* inferior materials. But the statement completely ignores the fact that a set of well-prepared, integrated materials makes the teaching job much easier, more efficient and, above all, more rewarding.

Telling a teacher unhappy with a mediocre program that the quality of his materials is largely insignificant is - in my opinion - a cheap shot at his professional ability. It puts him in a corner, faults *him* rather than his tools, and does nothing at all to make his task easier. Any new, inexperienced teacher will quickly point out the advantages of highly structured, well-prepared materials.

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In making this comment, I have no intention of putting the emphasis on the quality of the program rather than on the teacher,[1] but there is *no excuse* whatsoever for not using the best materials available to us or for failing to utilize the inherent strengths of a given program.

A SET OF WELL-PREPARED, INTEGRATED MATERIALS MAKE THE TEACHING JOB MUCH EASIER, MORE EFFICIENT AND, ABOVE ALL, MORE REWARDING.

In Alberta, the *A-LM German* materials have now been introduced throughout the province. Although the *Verstehen und Sprechen* series is still listed in the 1974 and the 1975 "Tentative Curriculum Guide" of the Department of Education as recommended instructional materials, *A-LM German* is the authorized No. 1 program. It is safe to assume that most teachers will have to work with these materials for a number of years, regardless of their instructional quality.

The purpose of this presentation is to analyze the program in terms of its weaknesses and positive features so that the former may be overcome and the latter be exploited to the fullest. My main concern is the best utilization of the program as it was intended by the authors. I am therefore not offering a list of special projects or enrichment goodies. The mark of a *good* teacher is not necessarily how innovative he is or how many fancy projects he can come up with, but how effectively he can teach the "basics," to use a popular political *Schlagwort* of our day.

Problems and Difficulties

My assessment of the *A-LM* program will deal with levels I and II as they are the only ones presently taught in Alberta. In my analysis, I have used my own classroom experiences and those of my Edmonton colleagues as well as the findings of

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[1]Serious teacher deficiencies cannot be overcome by the best materials although an excellent teacher may have good success with weak materials.

several German teachers from the Toronto area whose classrooms I visited during the spring of 1977. There was almost unanimous rejection of the *taped* program, especially the material intended for the language laboratory. There are three *serious* deficiencies.

1. The *Basic Dialogue* is broken up into two separate parts by the *Supplement* so that the dialogue as a whole is not recorded; the individual parts are then fragmented into small elements presented in such a repetitive fashion that both students and teachers find them extremely boring and frustrating, thus rendering this essential, introductory part of the program almost unusable in its present form (especially in *level I*).

2. The *Structure Drills*, some of which are well-chosen to reinforce a given grammatical structure, often lack a basic degree of challenge. Their monotony is aggravated by an uncommon six-step sequencing, rather than the usual four-step sequence of: a) tape stimulus, b) pause for student response, c) tape confirmation, and d) pause for student repetition. *A-LM* employs a wasteful six-step system containing only two student responses to four tape stimuli: a) tape stimulus, b) pause for student response, c) tape confirmation, d) repeat tape stimulus, e) pause for student repetition, and f) repeat of tape confirmation. Such conditioning may make Pavlov's dogs salivate, but it will not prevent our students from falling asleep.

3. The *Listening Comprehension Exercises*, which seem most useful if done in the classroom using the taped version, are unfortunately not recorded on separate tapes. This necessitates a lot of time-consuming tape manipulation and also accurate footing for all machines involved (at least two: laboratory and classroom). On the other hand, one finds the *Recombination Material* recorded on separate tapes for no obvious reason. Some schools, particularly in Ontario, find the taped material so frustrating that it is not used at all. One may also criticize the program for not providing a set of challenging taped questions requiring the student to give factual and personal answers.

The content and arrangement of the basic dialogues and their attached supplements have been rightly criticized by many. Why are the basic dialogues of *level I*, consisting of only eight lines, split in half? How should the vocabulary supplement, this dangling appendix, be properly integrated? But much more serious than this is the basic dialogue itself. The text is in many cases extremely dull, pedantic and stilted, not at all apt to stimulate student interest. Any sense of humour is lacking.

THE MARK OF A GOOD TEACHER IS... HOW EFFECTIVELY HE CAN TEACH THE "BASICS"

To introduce a dialogue of such scintillating brilliance requires from the teacher the skills of a consummate entertainer - like the colleague who made his classroom entry on roller-skates with a newspaper in one hand and his breakfast in the other - all in the name of arousing interest in the dialogue of *Unit 3*.

The sets of six black-and-white dialogue posters, designed to help introduce the basic sentences, are practically worthless. They are even duller and more colourless than the dialogues themselves and are quite often misleading because they do not adequately depict the spoken text. More useful are the smaller supplement posters which illustrate concrete objects, people and relationships. Unfortunately, they are only black and white and printed on both sides, thus limiting their usefulness. And there are no visuals to illustrate verbs.

UNSEMESTERING LANGUAGE CLASSES WOULD LEAD TO BETTER LEARNING CONDITIONS.

Apart from these flashcards, there are few visuals in the text. Each unit has only three to four colour photographs; *level II* even fewer. There is an obvious absence of cartoon-type humourous illustrations such as are so abundant in the LFI (*Le Français international*) texts.

Teacher complaints have led to the inclusion of a pictorial section in the second edition of the textbook, *Glimpses of West Germany*, and to the production of two *Sound Filmstrip* sets to go with some of the *Narratives*, starting with *Unit 6*. The latter fit in at the end of a particular chapter, but they are scenes or general illustrations for a narration, not visual correspondences to help teach a dialogue and explain vocabulary meaning.

The former, that is the colour photos, are intended to give the student at least some cursory information about life in the Federal Republic; explanations are in English. This material is best used when a particular topic presents itself in class, for example, the educational system or people at work.

MANY STUDENTS AT THE BEGINNER'S LEVEL HAVE DIFFICULTIES WITH ABSTRACT VERBAL CONCEPTS.

One of the most obvious shortcomings of the *level I* materials is the lack of motivational reading. Except for the short narratives, there is nothing to stimulate interest in the target language. Finding appropriate readers graded to the vocabulary and structure level of the *A-LM*[1] student is a difficult task even for the experienced teacher.

"A-LM" Methodology

Before suggesting remedies for the previously outlined deficiencies of *A-LM*, it is worthwhile to examine briefly the methodology and underlying pedagogical principles of the program.

A-LM was set up as a four-level (level stands for year) program, where fluency is not expected until the middle of the third year. Its basic orientation is academic; and it was prepared with the university-bound student in mind.

Pedagogically, it is based on the *conscious-practical method* of the early sixties: a highly structured program which relies heavily on the student's *conscious* knowledge of grammatical structures in his native language[2] and which requires from him a large amount of repetitive *practical* activity: manipulating the new structures and vocabulary items. In order that the program can succeed, it requires that the learner follow exactly the predetermined *sequence* of activities. This demands from

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[1]Two basic assumptions are made: a) all languages have structures, b) anyone with a basic knowledge of the structures in his own language can succeed with *A-LM* materials.

the teacher that he leave the essential steps in their proper sequence and that he refrain from undermining the program by inserting extraneous materials or discarding important elements necessary in the lock-step progression.

CARTOON-TYPE DRAWINGS RARELY
BECOME OUTDATED OR OLD-FASHIONED.

A-LM is a *package*, a complete unit; major surgery may kill the program. Each of the four levels should be taught in a year or semester, using a very rapid pace and sticking to the essentials. Adding frills and unrelated supplementary materials or activities may produce negative results. Because of its highly structured nature and lock-step approach, *A-LM* lends itself ideally to individual study, especially if the learner is highly motivated.

"A-LM" in the Alberta Classroom

When analyzing the weaknesses of *A-LM* in our own classrooms, we must take note of the type of students the program was intended for as well as such situational factors as the length of class periods and semestering.

A-LM is for the *academic* student, and he usually does well in this program. But it is also meant to be taught in a non-semestered class of at least 40 minutes per day. Using a fast pace and refraining form "overkilling" concepts will produce functional fluency toward the middle of the third level.

Unfortunately, most of us have classroom conditions which are such that we barely get to the third part of *level II*, although the Department of Education has stipulated that students reach the end of that level for getting credits. To expect functional fluency from these students is ludicrous. One important reason for the embarrassing progress is the lack of motivated, academically inclined students who are prepared to do at least a minimum of homework. Many of my own students with a German background only come for "easy credits." They want to be

entertained or sit and rest. They are not prepared to work academically. *A-LM* is certainly *not* the program for them.

Another negative classroom factor is semestering. Eighty consecutive minutes of concentrated activities is equally hard on students and teacher, not to mention the problems associated with the extended time lapse between German 10 and 20, and 20 and 30.

RECOMMEND RESTRAINT, IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THE MOTIVATIONAL STRENGTH OF THE MATERIALS.

In spite of these factors, we should accomplish better results, unless our program is seriously defective. We have already analyzed several areas where the materials are weak. Obviously, we need to remedy these problems. But there seem to be other aspects where we, as teachers, are not making the best use of what we have, or where we are - perhaps unknowingly - undermining the program.

Two of the most common errors are:

1) slowing down the recommended pace of three levels in three years, and

2) bringing in too many additional materials or "enriching" the program to the point of disrupting the lock-step progression.

Teachers in the Toronto area found little time for extras but were quite successful in their teaching; they *liked A-LM*, and so did their students. And they managed - in non-semestered classes - to teach all three levels in three years. We, too, could show better results if we increased the pace, challenged our students a little more and restricted ourselves to the essential aspects of our program. Losing those students who come merely for a rest or for entertainment does not amount to a real loss. Unsemestering language classes would also lead to better learning conditions, especially at the beginner's level.

Improving the Supplementary Materials

A. Filmstrips

The lack of pedagogically useful, interest-arousing visuals has been amply established. Teachers have found that many students at the beginner's level have difficulties with abstract *verbal* concepts if concrete or visual stimuli are not presented to show the relationship between word and object denoted or idea expressed. Most classroom objects present no problem: *Stuhl, Buch, Fenster*. But outside this narrow sphere, the teacher runs into difficulties: how does he *show* - quickly and effectively - "traurig", "meinen", or even "spielen"? Gestures, simple explanations, translations, and so on, all help, but they are problematic and often awkward at the early learning stages. Students who are psychologically still operating at the concrete level will not find it easy to grasp the lexical meaning when the reference to concrete situations within an unambiguous context is lacking.

This problem may be overcome by the "artistic" teacher who can "set the scene" with blackboard sketches, cartoons or other visuals such as overhead transparencies. It is a laborious task and usually not very efficient, although good use may be made of the overhead.

THESE MATERIALS ARE INTENDED AS PROGRAM FACILITATORS, NOT PROGRAM SUBSTITUTES.

To remedy this situation, it was decided to produce supplementary dialogues accompanied by flashcards illustrating the text. In all, eight interrelated dialogues were written to correspond to *Units* 1 to 8 of *level I*, all centering around the Braun family and their children Benno and Bertha. The situations are motivational and humourous; and the students can easily identify with the characters. The first set of flashcards produced was of such poor quality that the entire program was nearly abandoned.

It then became clear that filmstrips had to be developed. Cartoon-type drawings were chosen, not only for their comical

effect, but also because they rarely become outdated or old-fashioned. They also permit the use of a greater variety of exaggerated facial expressions without losing their credibility or making the figures look ridiculous. To keep costs down, the number of frames had to be kept to a minimum. This has, unfortunately, reduced the potential of the visuals. In some cases, the artist has not followed instructions exactly, which has resulted in some weak spots. A professional recording of the script, with special sound effects, is now in progress. Units 1 to 4 deal with these topics: 1. *Bei Familie Braun* introduction of the characters, including a brief episode in school. 2. *Tennis oder Karten* - Ute and Franz go for a pop after their tennis game; Ute then joins Benno who is playing cards and drinking beer. 3. *Wer streicht das Wohnzimmer?* - the Brauns are attempting to paint their living-room. 4. *Frau Braun gewinnt einen Preis* - Mrs. Braun wins the "Buteprize", a trip to Canada. The four unfinished units deal with the following situations:

5. *Auf dem Markt* (Ein Pullover im Katalog)[3] - the Brauns are buying souvenir gifts for relatives in Canada.

6. *Schule oder Schwänzen* (Walter besucht seine Schulfreundin) - Benno skips school because of a German test, and his girlfriend Ute makes a date with Franz.

7. *Eine Einladung für Herrn und Frau Braun* (Eine Einladung für Bernd) - the Bunte-Haus is giving a farewell party before the Brauns leave on their trip to Canada.

8. *In der Diskothek* (Am Nachmittag) - Ute and Benno go to the disco and there run into his German teacher with company.

When producing the scripts, every attempt was made to use as many of the vocabulary items and structures of the specific units as possible; additional vocabulary has been kept to a minimum.

The primary aim of the filmstrips is to help *introduce* new vocabulary and structures in a variety of real-life situations using characters which the student can see and hear and with whom he can identify. It is very important that the beginner does not have to operate in an abstract conceptual vacuum but that he is presented, by means of the visuals, with a specific context which he doesn't have to imagine. He can point out objects and people, imitate the characters, ask them questions, describe situations and relationships.

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[3]Titles of the corresponding units in *A-LM German*, level I.

The filmstrips also offer a wealth of incidental lexical items to the teacher who wants them. In addition, all sorts of *Voix et Images de France* type structure manipulations are possible, although I should like to recommend restraint, in order to maintain the motivational strength of the materials. There is no need to spend much time on writing out the dialogues (handouts can be used for reading practice). Rather, brief oral and written summaries should be encouraged.

As a matter of fact, the second strongest point of the filmstrip set is precisely this potential: to teach students how to summarize and change a dialogue into a continuous narrative using their own words. It should, however, at all times be remembered that these materials are intended as program facilitators, not program substitutes.

THE INDISCRIMINATE USE OF FILMS HAS HAD SOME RATHER ALARMING EFFECTS ON STUDENTS.

I have already referred to the two sets of *Sound Filmstrips* produced by the publishers which are meant to supplement and enrich selected narratives at the end of a unit. *Level I* has four, *Level II* has six filmstrips. Due to their length and degree of difficulty, they are best used in a reading-listening activity, but they are also well-suited as vocabulary builders. One of their objectives is the presentation of authentic cultural aspects, and, on the strength of that alone, they should be fully utilized in the classroom. It is suggested that the script be dubbed onto a tape so that the teacher may stop and advance it or repeat a phrase by remote control as required.

B. Films

I have recently purchased for our school system three sound filmstrips entitled *Berlin* (East and West) and *Urlaub auf Sylt* which may be used as suggested above (the former with *Unit 20*, the latter with *Unit 14* "Am Strand"). Additional ones on Switzerland (26), the Black Forest (19), the Rhein and the

Lorelei (17) or München (27) could easily be added. However, there is no need to insist on bringing in a filmstrip with every unit – it would not only be time-consuming, but also too repetitive.

THE STRENGTH OF GOOD VISUALS
LIES IN THE MESSAGE THEY CARRY,

Instead, one might, for variety, show a short film, but only if it is appropriate to the topic, of unquestionable quality, and offers more than just entertainment. The indiscriminate use of films has had some rather alarming effects on students in certain Edmonton high schools. Films for the language classroom must be chosen judiciously and should always involve some language learning, aside from providing information and cultural background.

THE POTENTIAL OF THE FILM ALONE
IN A LANGUAGE LEARNING SITUATION
IS RELATIVELY LIMITED

The monthly *Deutschlandspiegel* in English and German offered by the German Consulate in Edmonton are certainly worth showing. Most of you are doubtless familiar with them, and perhaps also with the *Guten Tag* series, which I use, sparingly, with relative success, in my beginners' classes. Each showing is followed by oral and written activities, carefully planned in advance.

I am particularly interested in improving the vocabulary and summarizing skills. It is important that the film reinforce structures just studied or that it introduce those to be taken up next. The potential of the film alone in a language learning situation is relatively limited, because it is practically

impossible to stop it and manipulate sound and picture. It is therefore best used as a motivational device and follow-up activity, giving the student the opportunity to apply his skills within a meaningful context. To discover that he can actually understand what is being said usually generates a sense of accomplishment which even surpasses that of having tackled a first reader.

C. Pictures

At the intermediate level - German 20, for example - I have used with good success pictorial situations from a booklet entitled *Vater und Sohn*.[4] Although the drawings are from an age long gone and somewhat old-fashioned, they are quite humourous and lend themselves well to short descriptions leading to more elaborate stories. The text provides the teacher with the necessary vocabulary items and several good questions, including discussion topics for those superbrains in your classes or the native background people. Overhead transparencies seem to work best, but individual student copies produced from a Gestetner stencil are quite satisfactory and may also be used for oral tests in the laboratory.

LABORATORY SESSIONS SHOULD NOT BE LONGER THAN 20 TO 25 MINUTES.

The special pedagogical strength of good visuals, especially drawings of the *Vater und Sohn* variety, lies in the message they carry and wish to communicate. They usually compel the viewer to react in some form. Used in the FL class, they not only help to elicit verbal responses, but guide the students and provide them with a specific context.

D. Other Improvements or Modifications

To have reasonable success with the *A-LM* program, it is imperative that its essential elements be taught in proper

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[4]Franz Eppert, *Vater und Sohn*, Band I (Ismaning: Max Hueber Verlag, 1974). A second volume was published in 1975. The cartoon drawings are from E.O. Plauen.

sequence in order to fully utilize the built-in reinforcing and constant review aspects. To isolate, for example, the grammatical section from the laboratory drills and the related writing activities will have negative results. A teacher would be ill-advised to complete the entire oral work of a unit first, follow with all the listening comprehension exercises, and then conclude by assigning all the written work *en bloc*. But neither should he feel obliged to use every activity just because it is provided. Experience has shown that many of the recorded *Listening and Speaking* exercises can be omitted. Most profitable are the *Listening Comprehension* exercises which also require an active response from the student. It is best to use the prerecorded material, rather than reading it to the students, to present them with a variety of models, and, very important, to accustom them early to the faster pace of the tape. This type of exercise, easily carried out in class, presents a bit of a challenge and can be used as a quick quiz if the teacher takes down the number of correct responses.

VERB FORMS NEED PARTICULAR ATTENTION DURING THE INITIAL LEARNING PHASE.

Because of their unsatisfactory format, I make little use of the taped structure drills. Instead, it is more profitable to practise a few in class and then to produce a live program in the laboratory. However, great care must be taken to stick to the proper drills, especially if the teacher has created his own examples. They should be prepared in advance, not *à l'impromptu*. Select only the best from the textbook, be precise, add a few challenging questions which permit personal answers and factual information (perhaps based on the *Basic Dialogue* or the *Narrative*). Laboratory sessions should not be longer than 20 or 25 minutes.

Some of the structure drills are best done in the classroom. Either do them completely orally by giving the stimuli yourself, or allow the students to read them aloud from their textbooks and ask a classmate to supply the response. Insist that the answers, whenever provided in the text, be covered up with a piece of paper. This procedure is particularly useful to the weak student, not because he can "peek and cheat" a little, but

because of the immediate verification in print of the correct answer. The "directed dialogues," where students are told what to ask and how to answer, are quite impersonal. After doing a couple of examples, it is best to adapt them to the given classroom situation, addressing the students personally.

Verb forms need particular attention during the initial learning phase. Often the drills are purely mechanical, not involving any form of communication. Learning takes place with great difficulty. A simple teaching trick borrowed from the *LFI* strategies greatly improves the nature and success of the drill. Rather than asking the student to give the correct verb form for a particular pronoun (example: *spielen*; teacher: *du* - student: *du spielst*), involve him in an active communication process through the use of carefully explained cues. First establish a model sentence: *Peter und Helga gehen an den See.*; then use the appropriate cues to elicit other verb forms:

teacher - *Und Sie?*
student - *Ich gehe auch an den See.*
teacher - *Und ich?*
student - *Sie gehen auch an den See.*

and so on. In this fashion, all forms may be obtained in a direct communication exchange which also challenges the student to find the correct pronouns. The exercise may also be done in reverse, asking the student to find the appropriate question cue to a given answer form:

teacher - *Es geht auch an den See.*
student - *Und das Kind?*
teacher - *Wir gehen auch an den See.*
student - *Sie und ich?* or *Sie und Ihr Freund?*

As the student progresses through the two levels of *A-LM*, the number of lexical items to be learned increases considerably. Many students show serious deficiencies in the later stages because they have not really mastered the vocabulary of earlier units. The problem quickly compounds itself. More emphasis must therefore be placed on the conscious acquisition of vocabulary items. It is to the advantage of the learner to be given many opposites, synonyms and definitions in the target language. The teacher should not be afraid to use English equivalents. Practically all important items in each unit should be tested in

a vocabulary quiz prior to the unit test, using a variety of methods. For example:

1) gender identification of nouns (fill in *der/die/das*),
2) plural formation of nouns,
3) English equivalents,
4) German equivalents,
5) opposites,
6) synonyms,
7) finding the defined word or expression,
8) defining a given lexical item.

The program provides for a number of written activities, mostly involving mechanical skills (cf. *Workbook*). It is good practice to correct these carefully by involving all students actively. After certain assignments have been completed, get all your students up to the board - at the same time, if possible - to write at least one answer. This will help to release some of their bottled-up physical energy, and it takes little time for the correction.

MORE EMPHASIS MUST THEREFORE
BE PLACED ON THE CONSCIOUS
ACQUISITION OF VOCABULARY ITEMS.

Whenever possible in the program, the teacher should encourage short summaries and free compositions, even at the early stages. The narratives lend themselves equally well to both exercises. To challenge the better student, assign him the summary, while asking the slower one to answer the printed questions. Both the narrative and the dialogues of the *Recombination Material* can be used as models for free compositions. Always discourage students from translating directly from English unless you are prepared to teach them proper translating skills and techniques. On the other hand, it is recommended to check from time to time the students' understanding by asking them to

render into good English a paragraph from a reading section or a difficult grammatical structure (this should be done orally).

The lack of simple but motivational reading material is most noticeable in *level I*, especially if a class includes students with a German background. To them, *A-LM* has very little to offer. The set of graded readers from the *Vorwärts*[5] program is well suited to fill this gap, even though the two programs do not coincide in their vocabulary progression.

Level II does not present this problem. The *Lektüre* reader which was especially prepared for this stage is carefully graded and harmonizes with the program's grammatical and lexical progression. In German 30, you might do well to select a short novel of moderate difficulty to be read outside the classroom but as a class project where each student is assigned a certain number of pages over a given time period, after which he has to give a short summary, hopefully in German. This procedure may trick a number of students into reading more than their specific assignment.

Although I generally discourage changing the grammatical sequence of the program, I have made two significant modifications which, in my opinion, have resulted in more efficient learning. Adjective endings may be sorted quite neatly into two, rather than three, groups: determined or non-determined. Once the student understands why and how each noun needs to be determined, he will find it much easier to learn the appropriate endings.

ALWAYS DISCOURAGE STUDENTS FROM TRANSLATING DIRECTLY FROM ENGLISH UNLESS YOU ARE PREPARED TO TEACH THEM PROPER TRANSLATING SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES.

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[5] *Vorwärts: Kurzfassung*, Nuffield Introductory German Course (Leeds: E.J. Arnold, 1974). The series consists of 16 readers, sold in sets of 6 each, covering a wide range of interest.

A second modification involves the irregular verbs which I categorize into four groups according to the stem vowels of their principal parts:

Group 1: same stem vowel in present tense and past participle (example: *geben, gab, gegeben*),

Group 2: same stem vowel in imperfect and past participle (example: *schreiben, schrieb, geschrieben*),

Group 3: progressive vowel change (example: *trinken, trank, getrunken*),

Group 4: hybrids and modals, mostly verbs with regular endings and stem vowel changes (example: *bringen, brachte, gebracht*).

I begin teaching them in small groups in *unit 17* in conjunction with the past tense of the modals.

IT IS ADVANTAGEOUS TO CARRY OUT A CONTINUOUS EVALUATION PROGRAM.

Finally, a word about evaluation and testing. It is advantageous to carry out a continuous evaluation program. Each unit should be tested, both in oral and written form. I have accepted the commercially-prepared written tests, although I don't consider them challenging enough and have made additions. Tests composed entirely of multiple choice - better still, multiple guess - items are, in most cases, a teacher cop-out; I have nothing positive to say about them. The *A-LM* tests were created to be relatively easy so that students would do quite well even though the recommended program coverage necessitates a very fast teaching pace. Whenever possible, it makes good pedagogical sense to correct the test immediately in class with student participation (if your students are mature enough). This is where significant learning can occur. The manufactured oral tests do not suit me, and I have replaced them with my own creations. They are administered in the language laboratory.

Since we have accepted the *A-LM* materials, which certainly are an improvement over the *Verstehen und Sprechen* series, we should make a serious effort to get the best pedagogical mileage out of them. This translates into exploiting the positive materials and modifying or replacing the weak elements. However, interfering with the sequencing or pacing of the program may have serious consequences. It is quite possible that the type of students in your classroom and their expectations are such that *A-LM* is not *your* program. In that case, discard it! Neither should you use it if your definition of language learning amounts to fun and games and films.

For those who do use it, I should like to suggest, as my conclusion, a possible approach to the introductory chapter of *level I*. Skipping the first unit is a good way to save time and discard a weak element; its only purpose is to introduce special items of German phonology. Instead, teach by the direct method several basic communication items such as *hello; how are you?; where do you live?; what are you doing?;* and appropriate answers.

TESTS COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF MULTIPLE CHOICE ITEMS ARE, IN MOST CASES, A TEACHER COP-OUT.

It is also an opportune time to show a good general film on Germany, perhaps *Ein Tag in Deutschland* which may be ordered from the German Consulate in Edmonton. I then teach orally *unit 1* of *Die Familie Braun* and follow with a careful reading of the nine basic dialogue sentences of *unit 1* in the textbook. The sentences are practised in the laboratory. I then proceed to the second filmstrip of *Familie Braun*, using it as an introduction to *unit 2*. The basic dialogue can then be read with ease and understanding. From here on, I follow the recommended sequence, always attempting to move ahead at a rapid pace - careful planning is essential - and integrating the previously described activities, materials and modifications with a minimal disruption of the interlocking nature of the program. ■